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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CHINLE MAN CHARGED WITH THREATENING A CANYON DE CHELLY PARK RANGER**

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – Justin Tso, Sr., 57, of Chinle, Ariz., was charged here by a federal complaint on March 3, 2005 with Threatening a Federal Law Enforcement Officer in violation of Title 36, U.S. Code, Section 2.32(a)(1). After his initial appearance in federal court, Tso was released pending further proceedings in federal court in Flagstaff, Ariz. scheduled for April 13, 2005.

Tso was arrested in Window Rock, Ariz. on March 8, 2005 by U.S. Park Rangers, with assistance from Navajo Nation Rangers and officers from the Navajo Police Department, after Tso allegedly made threats to a National Park Service Ranger in the Canyon de Chelly National Monument. At the time of the threatening statement in late February 2005, the Park Ranger was assisting Navajo Nation Rangers in a separate investigation into allegations of animal cruelty filed by tribal law enforcement against Tso.

According to the affidavit submitted in support of criminal complaint, Navajo Nation Rangers, assisted by law enforcement personnel from the National Park Service and the Navajo Police Department, executed a tribal warrant in late February 2005, alleging violations by Tso of animal cruelty and environmental laws. At that time more than 20 horses were seized from Justin's Horse Rentals, owned and operated by Tso at the mouth of Canyon de Chelly. Tso has since pleaded guilty in tribal court to one count of animal cruelty. Navajo Nation Rangers have subsequently charged Tso with 20 additional counts of animal cruelty and related environmental crimes.

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Tso is alleged to have threatened to have the federal Park Ranger "removed from the reservation" if she did not stop her investigation. Tso apparently targeted the female Park Ranger as he believed she would be more easily intimidated than her male colleagues.

Paul Charlton, U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona stated that "Members of federal law enforcement serve this nation proudly. We take threats against them seriously and will file federal criminal charges against anyone who makes such a threat."

A conviction for Threatening a Federal Law Enforcement Officer carries a maximum penalty of six months in prison, a \$5,000 fine or both.

A criminal complaint is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation was conducted U.S. Park Service, Navajo Nation Rangers and the Navajo Police Department.

The prosecution is being handled by Camille Bibles, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Flagstaff, Ariz.

CASE NUMBER: MAG-05-4048M  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2005-042

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